



## High temperatures can have devastating effect on livestock

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MADISON – Officials at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) encourage livestock owners to take extra precautions during the impending heat wave. They warn that when temperatures soar into the upper 90s even animals used to range conditions can suffer heat stress to the point of illness or death.

“All animals are at risk for heat stress, but animals that are in the last stages of pregnancy, nursing animals, are very young or old, or ill are at greatest risk. To top it all off, summer is high time for livestock shows and exhibitions, adding heat to an already stressful situation,” says Dr. Robert Ehlenfeldt, DATCP’s State Veterinarian. He advises watching for the signs of heat illness in animals such as heavy panting and breathing, dry or hot skin, refusal to eat or drink, inability to rise or even unconsciousness.

“Heat stroke requires **immediate** attention to save the animal,” Ehlenfeldt says. If the animal is in the sun move it to a shaded, cooler area. Ventilate an enclosed area. Get medical help as soon as possible. Use lukewarm, never cold water to sponge down or hose off the animal to lower its temperature.

“The good news is that with proper care most animals can safely make it through a heat wave,” Ehlenfeldt says.

Ehlenfeldt offers the following tips to ensure the safety of your animals in the hot weather:

At minimum, all animals must have unrestricted access to clean, and preferably cool, drinking water during extreme heat. Animals may double or triple their water intake in extreme weather. Check tanks or buckets several times during the day and, if possible, move them out of direct sunlight. Make sure automatic watering devices are working. Make sure lower ranking animals in the herd are able to get to water; sometimes bossy animals prevent others from drinking. You may want to add a second or even third drinking source in extreme heat to make sure all animals get an adequate intake.

Try to provide shade for all animals pastured outside. Consider adding shade cloth or tarps to an area to provide shade or open pastures to areas where trees or buildings provide shade. Normally, horses, sheep, goats and cattle may do fine in pastures or pens without shade but when temperature and humidity are high these areas become very uncomfortable, even deadly. Also be aware that light-colored animals like pigs and horses can get sunburned.

If animals are left in buildings, make sure they are not too crowded and that the building is well ventilated. Fans are highly recommended.

Avoid handling animals and transporting them in extreme heat. Do any chores that would involve stressing the animals in the early morning or late evening when it’s cooler. In the case of shows and exhibitions, ask that the schedule be changed to engage in stressful activities like barrel racing when the temperature is cooler. Don’t leave livestock in trailers or pick up beds during extreme heat for more than a few minutes.

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